



ENGRAVED ON MY HEART.

Faces of Valais.

“The mountains are among the most stunning places I’ve had the chance to explore.”

After a childhood spent between Valais and Quebec, journeys worldwide (from the west coast of the USA to Central America and Oceania) and a stint as a sailor in the Pacific, Florian Bouvet-Fournier decided to settle down in Nendaz. Now 32, this freeride enthusiast of French/Valais parentage opened own his photography and film studio at the foot of the mountain two years ago.

Florian Bouvet-Fournier is never without his favourite object: his camera. “I’ve always loved sharing my passion visually. At first, I took pictures for myself, then I started sharing them on social media. One thing led to another, and some opportunities came up in Valais. And now I have been living from it for two years.” Florian grew up in Nendaz, and it is at the heart of the resort that he has opened his own gallery and photographic studio – but not without hesitation. “I feared this pied-à-terre might act as a brake on having other adventures,” he says. For this nomad spent his twenties criss-crossing the globe, never lingering more than eight months in any one place. “I started studying anthropology at university, but I soon realised that I wanted to get to know the human race out on the road, not in the classroom.” He has had this appetite for travel since he was a child, when his parents decided to emigrate to Quebec. “I was 12 at the time. I remember being really keen to move there. The open horizons, the North American mentality, the wildlife – all that made me dream.”

After travels worldwide, a return to Valais

At the age of 20, he interrupted his university studies to travel down the west coast of America by bike. The expedition took him to Nicaragua and then Costa Rica, where he did some WWOOFing – a form of volunteering popular among international travellers, who work at organic farms worldwide in exchange for bed and board. A few years later, he headed to Oceania, without fixing a return date. After a season of harvesting in Australia and grape-picking in New Zealand, he worked on a sailing boat in the Pacific: an experience that had a profound effect on him. “On board, I read the adventures of our boat’s skipper 20 years earlier. On one of these expeditions, near the coast of New Zealand, his boat capsized, and tragically a young female passenger died in the shipwreck. During our first week of sailing, we found ourselves in a violent storm that had come up from Antarctica. I was living just what I was reading. The memory often comes back to me in my dreams or when I meditate.” The adventure-seeker finished his two-year journey with a visit to the mountains of his birthplace, which he saw covered in snow for the first time since he left them at the age of 12. He caught the bug immediately.

A taste for competition

Florian Bouvet-Fournier loved snow sports from a very young age and took up snowboarding at 10. On the “hills” of eastern Quebec, hotspot for urban freestyle, he often remained in the background to capture the feats of his peers on camera. When he returned to Valais, everything took on a completely new dimension: “This time, I had the chance to tackle really big mountains.” In his second winter season among 4,000-metre peaks, he entered the world of freeride competition, prompted by the enthusiasm of seasonaire friends. For Florian, it was simply a question of “getting to grips with powder and steeper slopes.” His successes have included a 2nd place in the European leg of the Freeride World Qualifier; he is also the first and only holder of the title of Swiss Freeride Champion (the event has taken place only once). At the age of 32, after a year’s break following an injury, he is returning to competition riding: “I’ve never been in such good shape as now. In freeriding, it’s experience that can make all the difference.”



ENGRAVED ON MY HEART.

A passion to be shared

The traveller at heart has finally found a home, here in Valais. To ride, but also because the region's topography and its diversity of landscapes - from the towns along the Rhône to the mountainous side valleys - give him all he needs professionally. "This winter is the eighth in a row that I'm spending in Nendaz. The mountains are among the most stunning places I've had the chance to explore." Each photo, each film, shares a hidden common denominator: "What drives my work is being able to show my passion as well as other people's - from emotions at a marriage to the pride of a cowherd presenting his animals." Has the nomad settled down once and for all? "In 10 years, it's quite possible I'll be here... or maybe somewhere else. But I'd love to invest in a chalet in Nendaz... at the foot of the mountain."

Would you like to know more? We would be happy to provide you with further information or organise an interview with Florian Bouvet-Fournier.